

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 IO-13 HA-05 /092 W
-----120558 281130Z /11

R 280939Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9201
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L S E C T I O N 1 O F 2 ADDIS ABABA 3306

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, EG, ET, SU
SUBJ: SUDANESE/EGYPTIAN MEDIATION OFFER ON ERITREA

SUMMARY. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR AT ADDIS INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT PRESIDENT NYERERE HAD BROUGHT EGYPTIAN/SUDANESE MEDIATION OFFER ON ERITREA FROM KHARTOUM MEETING. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR LACKED DETAILS BUT PROMISED ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN AND INFORM EMBASSY HERE. QUERIED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF ANY SUDANESE/EGYPTIAN MEDIATION OFFER, CAMEROON AMBASSADOR, WHO IS DEAN OF CORPS HERE, CONSIDERED SUCH MOVE UNLIKELY AND UNPRODUCTIVE AS, IN HIS OPINION, SUDAN DIRECTLY COMMITTED ON THE SIDE OF THE GUERRILLAS AND EGYPT INDIRECTLY. CAMEROONIAN MABASSADOR SAID THAT SINCE HIS COUNTRY WAS A MEMBER OF THE SUDAN-ETHIOPIAN GOOD OFFICES COMMITTEE OF OAU, HE WOULD BE SEEING MENGISTU SHORTLY CONCERNING FUTURE STEPS TO BRING ABOUT PEACEFUL CONCLUSION OF ERITREAN DISSIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING ROUTINE COURTESY CALL JULY 27 ON EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR, I RAISED ERITREAN SITUATION AND ASKED FOR AMBASSADOR'S REACTION TO ACTION ON THIS SUBJECT AT KHARTOUM OAU MEETING WHICH HE HAD ATTENDED. AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY HIS FOREIGN MINISTER IN KHARTOUM THAT SADAT HAD RAISED WITH NYERERE THE SUGGESTION THAT EGYPT AND SUDAN JOINTLY MEDIATE THE ERITREAN SITUATION. AMBASSADOR SAID HIS

FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NOT PROVIDED HIM WITH ANY DETAILS AND THAT HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED DETAILED WRITTEN REPORTS FROM CAIRO. I SPECIFICALLY ASKED HIM WHETHER HE WAS AWARE OF THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF THIS MEDIATION EFFORT AND WHETHER THERE WAS A CONCEPT OF WHICH DISSIDENT GROUPS WOULD MEET ON THE ERITREAN SIDE, TO BOTH OF WHICH HE REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION.

2. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT NYERERE HAD INDEED BROUGHT THE PROPOSAL TO ADDIS ABABA JULY 22 AND HAD DISCUSSED IT WITH MENGISTU. NYERERE MADE GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC COMMENTS TO EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR AT RECEPTION AFTERNOON JULY 22 AND MENGISTU SMILINGLY TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE HAD "RECEIVED THE MESSAGE." EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR WAS UNABLE TO CONSULT WITH THE TANZANIAN AMBASSADOR WHO LEFT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER NYERERE'S DEPARTURE JULY 23, AND HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO REACH THE TANZANIAN CHARGE WHO HAS BEEN BUSY WITH THREE TANZANIAN MINISTERS STILL IN TOWN. EGYPTIAN SAID HE WOULD BE TRYING TO SEE MENGISTU IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND WOULD INFORM ME ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

3. I INFORMED EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR THAT DURING MY CALL ON MENGISTU TO PRESENT MY LETTERS OF CREDENCE, HE HAD RAISED ERITREAN SITUATION AND I HAD RESPONDED THAT US CONSIDERED ERITREA PART OF ETHIOPIA BUT THAT WE HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION THROUGH NEGOTIATION. MENGISTU HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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IMMEDIATELY ENDORSED THIS FORMULATION. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THIS COMMENT WHICH WAS SO AT VARIANCE WITH PUBLIC ETHIOPIAN POSITION THAT DISSIDENTS MUST BE CRUSHED BY MILITARY FORCE. (THIS IS EXAGGERATION OF ETHIOPIAN POSITION WHICH STILL CALLS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON BASIS OF "NINE-POINT PROGRAM.")

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3306

4. DURING AFTERNOON COURTESY CALL JULY 27 ON DEAN OF DIPLO-MATIC CORPS, THE CAMEROON AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD ALSO BEEN AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF HIS COUNTRY'S DELEGATION AT KHARTOUM MEETINGS, I ASKED FOR HIS REACTIONS ON THE CONFERENCES AND IN DUE COURSE ON THE ERITREAN QUESTION. CAMEROON AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT HIS COUNTRY WAS A MEMBER OF THE SUDAN/ETHIOPIA GOOD OFFICES COMMITTEE OF THE OAU AND THAT HE THOUGHT SOME PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE WITH REGARD TO SUDANESE/ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. THERE WERE THREE PROBLEMS: THE GENERAL BILATERAL TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OF REFUGEES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER, AND THE ERI-TREAN DISSIDENTS THEMSELVES. WHEN I INQUIRED WHETHER HE HAD HEARD OF ANY POSSIBILITY OF A SUDAN/ETHIOPIA MEDIATION OFFER ON THE ERITREAN QUESTION, THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY THAT HE CONSIDERED ANY SUCH IDEA UNLIKELY AND DOOMED TO FAILURE BECAUSE THE SUDAN WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH ERITREAN GUERRILLAS AND EGYPT WAS INDIRECTLY INVOLVED.

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5. HAVING BRUSHED THIS SUBJECT ASIDE, THE AMBASSADOR WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD BE ATTEMPTING TO SEE CHAIRMAN MENGISTU IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE BUT UNSPECIFIC INITIATIVES WITH REGARD TO A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE ERI-TREAN QUESTION. MY IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD NO SPECIFIC PROPOSALS IN MIND BUT WISHED TO SOUND OUT WHAT MENGISTU MIGHT BE WILLING TO DO. THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT HE BELIEVED THAT MENGISTU MIGHT BE WILLING TO REACH A SOL-UTION BY REGOTIATION BUT THAT FIRST HE WOULD HAVE TO REACH A POSITION OF MILITARY STRENGTH IN THE AREA. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THE RECENT MILITARY SUCCESSES PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED BY THE PMGSE JULY 27, AND REPORTED BY THIS EMBASSY (FURTHER ADVANCES, INCLUDING THE OPENING OF THE ROAD TO ASMARA, WERE ANNOUNCED JULY 29). THE CAMEROON AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT THE TIME MIGHT SOON BE AT HAND WHEN MENGISTU WOULD BE PREPARED

TO NEGOTIATE. I COMMENTED THAT NYERERE HAD MADE SOMEWHAT
SIMILAR COMMENTS TO SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES DURING HIS BRIEF
VISIT HERE.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: CONTINUING ETHIOPIAN MILITARY SUCCESS
IN ERITREA MAY WELL ACCELERATE THE MOVE TOWARD SOME NEGOTIATED
SETTLEMENT OF THE ERITREAN QUESTION. EMBASSY WILL ATTEMPT
TO KEEP UP TO DATE WITH VARIOUS INITIATIVES IN THIS REGARD
AND KEEP THE DEPT AND INTERESTED POSTS INFORMED.
CHAPIN

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